

# ABIGAIL ADAMS

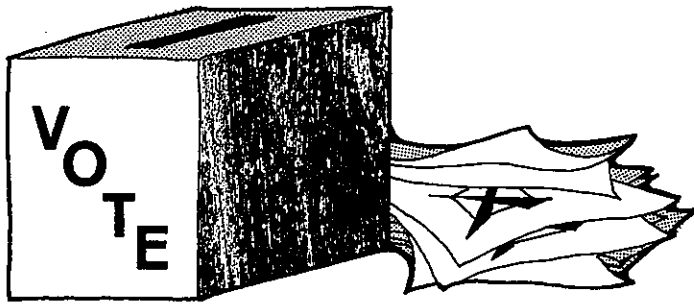


Few women in history could match the influence of Abigail Adams in state affairs. As the wife of one President and the mother of another, she served in a very influential role during the infant years of the new nation. She exercised considerable political power in a wifely sort of way and was an early advocate of women's rights. Abigail was so skillful in the way she applied her influence that few even recognized the far-reaching implications. She would have publicly denied her power, because she had no desire for the limelight, but her sustained and brilliant correspondence to her husband during their long absences from one another have very definitely figured in the course of American history.

She was the daughter of a parson who would have preferred she had chosen to marry someone of the clergy in preference to a lawyer (John Adams), a profession not entirely respectable. It was during this time (pre-Revolution) that she became deeply involved in the politics of the day, listening for hours to conversations between John and his friends.

When the Revolutionary War was over, her husband was appointed Commissioner to France. There she learned the grace and charm that accompanied European culture traits that would prove valuable to her when she became First Lady. She was delighted when John was elected President after serving as Washington's Vice President for eight years. However, he had several political enemies and he was at times blunt and tactless, and his administration lasted only one term. Abigail was very bitter when it became evident that his main political rival, Thomas Jefferson, would probably win the election of 1800, and she was reluctant to move into the new President's House when the capital was changed to Washington, D.C. But being the trouper that she was and because she was very faithful to her husband's wishes, she did move, even though her stay was a short one. In fact she helped to launch society in the new capital by organizing the first full-dress reception to be held in the President's House, more popularly called the Palace. Saddened by the loss of the election of 1800 and by the loss of their son Charles, Abigail and John returned to their farm in Massachusetts. She always felt that history would vindicate her husband's decisions and it did. Seven years after her death, her son John Quincy became President of the United States.

# SUSAN B. ANTHONY

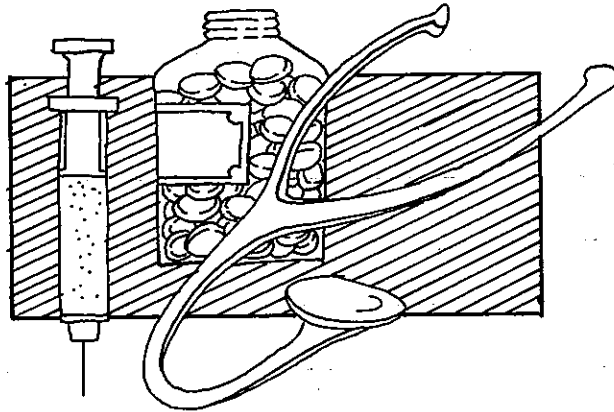


Susan Brownell Anthony was one of the true pioneers among women in their quest for equality among men. She helped to organize the suffrage movement and also was a firm believer in other major reform issues like temperance and antislavery.

She was born of Quaker parents in 1820 in Adams, Massachusetts. Her father believed strongly in education and organized a school in his house that was attended by Susan. She then taught school herself until she was recruited by Elizabeth Cady Stanton to lend her support to the movement for women. The two became associates and Anthony, convinced that she could never appeal to a man because of a cast in one eye, threw her heart and soul into the fight for equality. However, there was constant bickering and tension between the leaders, that included Anthony, Lucy Stone, Nette Brown and Stanton. During her campaign for temperance, she became even more aware of the prejudice against women and the low station in life they occupied. She pushed for women workers to organize into unions and following the Civil War began her fight for suffrage. The campaign began in Kansas where Anthony and her little troupe were often ridiculed, but some people did listen. In the end, however, suffrage was defeated in Kansas.

Susan B. Anthony refused to give up and in 1869 formed the National Woman Suffrage Association. She published a weekly tabloid-sized, 16-page paper called *The Revolution* that contained a variety of views about women and their needs for equality. The paper eventually lost \$10,000, but Anthony paid off every penny of the debts through her lecture and personal austerity. A rival suffrage group organized under Lucy Stone, and the two groups waged their separate battles for equality for twenty years before finally merging. In 1872 she voted in the presidential election and was arrested and fined \$100. Anthony never paid the fine and no further action was taken. In 1878 Senator A.A. Sargent introduced a woman suffrage amendment known as the Susan B. Anthony Amendment. It lingered on the desks of Congressmen for forty-two years before eventually becoming the nineteenth amendment in 1920. Anthony died in 1906, but the memory of her work will never be forgotten. In 1979 the government minted one-dollar coins bearing her resemblance, and she thus became the first woman so honored by having her picture on a coin in circulation.

# ELIZABETH BLACKWELL



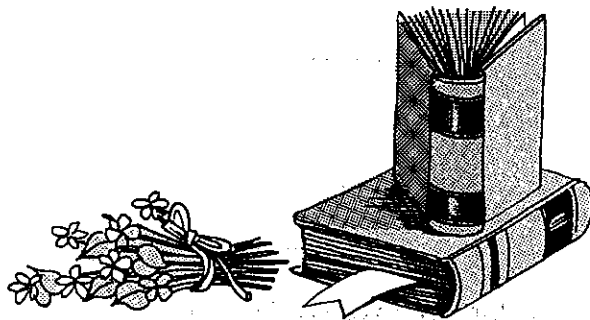
Elizabeth Blackwell became the first woman physician in the United States. To achieve this distinction, she overcame a great deal of personal ridicule and abuse by those who were against women doing anything beyond tending to their homes, their husbands and their children.

Born in Bristol, England, she emigrated to the United States when she was in her youth. She learned what she could about medicine from John Dickson, a clergyman doctor in Asheville, North Carolina. She later studied under his brother. After applying (and being turned down) to no less than twenty-nine different medical schools, including Harvard, Yale and all the schools in New York City, she was accepted for admission at Geneva College of Medicine (later a part of State University of New York in Syracuse) only after the men at the college had jokingly voted to accept her. Her first practical experience came in Philadelphia Hospital in 1848, where she helped combat an epidemic of typhus. She later wrote her thesis on the subject. She studied very hard and overshadowed her male counterparts, finishing at the head of her graduating class in 1849. Although penniless, she borrowed enough money to buy a black silk dress for the occasion because she felt it was important. She also refused to march in the graduation procession because she considered it unladylike.

Miss Blackwell continued her study of medicine abroad, then attempted to set up a practice in New York City. She was ostracized and discouraged wherever she went, but she did not give up. Eventually she bought a house in a New York City slum and opened a clinic with the help of a few New Yorkers, most of them Quakers. In 1857 she founded the New York Infirmary for Women and Children, and in 1867 she was able to add the Woman's Medical College. She spent most of her life championing the rights of women and in her later years, poured forth a great deal of effort toward gaining for women the right to vote.

In 1869 Miss Blackwell moved to London where she helped to establish the National Health Society of London and the London School of Medicine for Women. Among her writings are *The Physical Education of Girls* and *Pioneer Work in Opening the Medical Profession to Women*.

# LUCY STONE



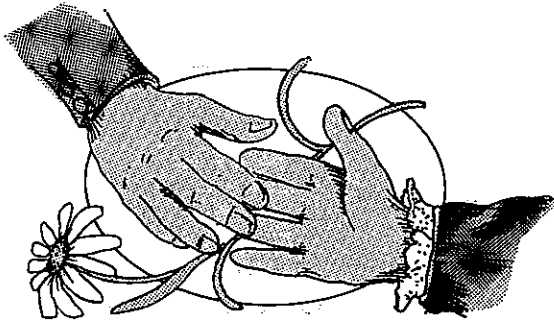
Lucy Stone was one of the foremost leaders in the movement to advance the rights of women in the United States. Her lectures on antislavery and women's rights combined with her fire and determination to succeed made her one of the most outspoken women of her day. As a young child she had been disturbed at the long hours of drudgery imposed on her mother, and she rejected the biblical stand that men should rule over women. As she once said, "There was only one will in our house and that was my father's." In fact her mother had milked eight cows the night before Lucy's birth.

When she married Henry Blackwell, she insisted on keeping her maiden name, and she wrote out one of the first "marriage contracts" ever. Lucy also insisted that the word *obey* be deleted from the marriage vows. She had been so determined to go to college that she scrimped and saved her money for nine years to get enough money to enter Oberlin College in Ohio at the age of twenty-five. Because she had to take in extra jobs to support her education expenses, she would rise at 2:00 in the morning to study. Her outspoken views made her somewhat unpopular with members of the faculty, but she graduated at the head of her class in 1847, becoming one of the first women in the United States to earn a college degree. Her degree was in jeopardy for awhile as she was invited to write an essay for commencement exercises, but was not going to be allowed to read the essay. She considered it an insult and refused to write the essay.

Such was the life-style of Lucy Stone, who lectured throughout the United States and Canada relating to all who would listen of the evils of slavery and discrimination against women. She did her best to convince her good friend Antoinette Brown not to marry because she feared "Nette" would allow her husband to rule the marriage. The two eventually became sisters-in-law when they married the Blackwell brothers. Lucy Stone, however insisted on the marriage contract, and she spelled out the independence as a human being she expected from her husband.

Lucy Stone was one of the first women to speak out on the injustice of preventing women from voting. Although she died in 1893, long before women actually won the right to vote, she was proud of the success she had achieved, even though the "price to pay had been great."

# FRANCES WILLARD



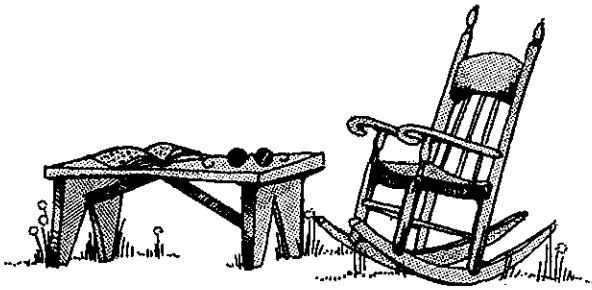
The late 1800's saw women's clubs springing up all over the United States. Although the position of women was far from the equal of men, the mere fact that they were organizing publicly and discussing freely issues of genuine concern was a giant step forward for them. None of these clubs or organizations were as active as Frances Willard's Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Its membership spanned the entire country and boasted of over 200,000 strong.

Frances Willard was one of the most influential women in the United States as she served as the Temperance Union's president from 1879 until her death in 1898. Under her leadership the organization enlisted tens of thousands of women who descended on the saloons of America declaring war on alcohol and the evils accompanied by its use. Men were offended by the tactics used by the W.C.T.U. and often regarded their ambitions as an attack on masculinity itself! The women marched and prayed, and their "military" attack on evil caused insecurity among men.

Perhaps Frances' capacity for organization was her strongest attribute, but she also approached her goals with both tact and persuasion. She knew how to make her programs work and viewed W.C.T.U. as actually more than a temperance movement against alcohol. Now was the opportunity for women to expand their status in other areas of social reform as well.

Her ten years of speaking engagements all over the country inspired women to support her Home Protection program, which covered literally everything from woman suffrage to prison reform. Her political ambitions led her to attempt to unite two powerful reform parties (Prohibition Party and Knights of Labor) into a coalition of close to one million votes. Her attempts failed, however, as a rival who was jealous of her success convinced the Prohibition Party to go their own way. She was a very persuasive and convincing speaker, and even though she often faced a hostile crowd, she had tactful ways of gaining their attention. When she talked she made every new program sound like an absolutely necessary and challenging part of a woman's life, and her very presence brought with it an air of excitement. When Frances Willard died in 1898, her death was mourned by thousands, both women and men, throughout the nation.

# HELEN KELLER



Helen Keller was stricken with a rare brain disease before she was two years of age, and her world suddenly went without sight and sound. She could no longer communicate with others and faced an unknown world of silence and darkness for the rest of her life. Shortly before Helen was seven, her father took her to Dr. Alexander Graham Bell, who suggested they contact the Perkins Institute for the Blind in Boston, Massachusetts.

Anne Sullivan from Boston was then hired to become Helen's teacher. Anne had been nearly blind herself as a child but had her sight restored by surgery. Early communication was established with Helen by touching and spelling words on her hand. When she was able to associate objects in the real world with words, progress began to occur rapidly. She worked out an alphabet and within a short time had converted Helen to Braille. By the time she was ten years old, she had learned to speak. She loved nature and all its glory, especially animals. When she was a little girl, Anne took her to the zoo and Helen was able to touch some of the trained animals. Her experience was unforgettable.

Helen enrolled at Radcliffe College and graduated with honors in 1904. She spent the rest of her life giving lectures, writing books, and making public appearances in the hope of encouraging and assisting those who were blind through her own personal example of a living inspiration.

After World War II, she visited wounded veterans in hospitals all over the world. She spoke in England, France, Italy, and Greece on behalf of the physically handicapped. In 1964 she was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Her books include *The Story of My Life*, *Midstream—My Later Life*, *Let Us Have Faith*, *Out of the Dark* and *The Open Door*. Her life story became the subject of a successful play called *The Miracle Worker*. Helen Keller died in 1968.